

Message Text

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SUBJECT: SANTA MARTA MEETING: PRESS CONFERENCE AND SPEECHES

1. SUMMARY: SPEECHES GIVEN BY PRESIDENTS LOPEZ AND PEREZ AND GENERAL TORRIJOS ON JULY 29 AT SANTA MARTA WERE LARGELY CEREMONIAL AND REPEATED

WELL-KNOWN THEMES. REMARKS BY THE THREE GOVERNMENT LEADERS LACKED SUBSTANCE AND SEEMED WANTING IN THE WAKE OF THE BUILD-UP GIVEN TO THE MEETING BY LOCAL PRESS AND THE GOC. A PRESS CONFERENCE WITH ALL THREE LEADERS LATER IN THE DAY PERMITTED EXPANSION ON MAJOR ISSUES. TORRIJOS

UNDERLINED HIS HAD LINE ON THE CANAL ISSUE AND LOPEZ AND PEREZ CLEARLY

EXHIBITED A WILLINGNESS TO SEEK A SOLUTION TO THE GULF OF VENEZUELA DISPUTE. END SUMMARY.

2. IN HIS SPEECH LOPEZ SPOKE OF SANTA MARTA, PAST AND PRESENT, FOR HIS

LOCAL AUDIENCE, BUT EMPHAISZED THE THEME OF "AMERICANISM". HE LAUDED THE CONFRONTATION BY LOCAL BANANA WORKERS 40 YEARS AGO WITH A "POWERFUL" FORIEGN FIRM" INVOLVED IN CORRUPTING LOCAL OFFICIALS, THEN REMINDED LISTENERS OF THE RECENT "HORRENDOUS TRAFFICKING IN INFLUENCE" BY TRANSATIONAL COMPANIES IN CENTRAL AMERICA. LOPEZ

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DREW ATTENTION TO IMPROVEMENTS MADE IN SANTA MARTA, LINKING HIS

ADMINISTRATION TO THE PROGRESS THERE AND UNDERLINING ASSISTANCE FROM FRANCE AND SPAIN. HE REITERATED COLOMBIAS SOLIDARITY WITH PANAMA IN ITS "STRUGGLE OF BIBLICAL DIMENSIONS" TO GAIN TOTAL CONTROL OVER THE CANAL, AND VOICED SUPPORT FOR ARGENTINA'S CLAIM TO THE MALVINA (FALKLAND) ISLANDS. THE PRESIDENT RESTATED HIS COUNTRY'S BACKING OF THE LATIN AMERICA ECONOMIC SYSTEM (SELA), THEN RECALLED THAT THE MONROE DOCTRINE WAS A MOVE TO PROTECT THE AMERICAS FROM EUROPE AND NOT TO "CONSECRATE THE SUPREMACY OF THE U.S. OVER THE REST OF AMERICA".

3. PRESIDENT PEREZ FOCUSED ON THE TERRITORIAL WATERS DISPUTE WITH COLOMBIA AND EMPHASIZED THE DETERMINED AND FRIENDLY EFFORT TO REACH AN ACCORD. REFLECTING VOCAL VENEZUELAN PUBLIC DISAPPROVAL OF LOPEZ CONDOMINIUM PLAN FOR THE GULF OF VENEZUELA (BOGOTA 6851), PEREZ POLITELY SAID THAT "THE OPINIONS OF THE PRESIDENT OF COLOMBIA.. WILL BE LISTENED TO BY US WITH RESPECT AND CORDIALITY".. LATER, HE SAID, VENEZUELA WILL NEVER SACRIFICE PRINCIPLES OF SOVEREIGNTY WHICH ARE LINKED WITH THE DELIMITATION OF SEA BEDS... NEVERTHELESS, HE EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE OVER EVENTUALLY REACHING AN AGREEMENT. PEREZ ALSO ADDED HIS SUPPORT FOR PANAMA'S CANAL DEMANDS AND BOLIVIA'S DESIRE TO GAIN ACCESS TO THE PACIFIC.

4. IN THE SHORTEST OF THE THREE SPEECHES, GEN TORRIJOS SWELLED ON THE CANAL ISSUE AND SAID THAT THE STRUGGLE FOR EMANCIPATION FROM NORTH AMERICAN DOMINATION WILL NOT END UNTIL ALL OBJECTIVES HAVE BEEN CLEARLY ACCOMPLISHED.

5. LATER IN THE DAY, THE THREE LEADERS GAVE A JOINT PRESS CONFERENCE WHICH ALLOWED THEM TO RESTATE AND EXPAND UPON THE PRINCIPAL

ISSUES OF THE CANAL, THE COLOMBO-VENEZUELAN WATERS DISPUTE, AND ECONOMIC COOPERATION. GEN TORRIJOS DREW ATTENTION WITH STATEMENTS ON THE CANAL. MOST SIGNIFICANT WAS HIS LIGHTLY VEILED THREAT THAT PANAMA COULD BECOME ANOTHER VIETNAM IF NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE U.S. FAIL. HE EMPHATICALLY STATED THAT PANAMA WILL AGREE TO NOTHING LESS THAN FULL SOVEREIGNTY OVER EVERY INCH OF PRESENT CANAL ZONE TERRITORY. FINALLY HE CONFIDENTLY MAINTAINED THAT PANAMANIAN'S COULD EFFECTIVELY RUN THE CANAL ITSELF AND REVEALED THAT EGYPT'S PRES SADAT HAD OFFERED TO TRAIN PANAMANIAN'S IN CANAL OPERATIONS.

6 BOTH LOPEZ AND PEREZ GAVE EMPHASIS TO THE NEED FOR ECONOMIC INTEGRATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND EXPRESSED THE DESIRE THAT THE PROCESS BE SPEEDED UP. HOWEVER, THEY DECLINED TO COMMENT ON SPECIFIC QUESTIONS REGARDING THE ANDEAN PACT. LOPEZ STATED THAT SUCH MATTERS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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COULD APPROPRIATELY BE DISCUSSED ONLY WITH ALL MEMBERS OF THE ANDEAN GROUP PRESENT.

7. REPORTERS ASKED A NUMBER OF QUESTIONS CONCERNING THE COLOMBO-VENEZUELAN WATERS DISPUTE AND LOPEZ CONDOMINIUM IDEA. BOTH LOPEZ AND PEREZ TOOK PAINS TO HIGHLIGHT THE AIR OF CORDIALITY SURROUNDING DISCUSSIONS ON THE MATTER AND THEIR COMMENTS INDICATED A PROFOUND DESIRE REACH A SOLUTION. PEREZ NOTED THAT COLOMBIA HAD NOT YET DELIVERED A FORMAL PROPOSAL REGARDING THE CONDOMINIUM IDEA AND

LOPEZ' OWN REMARKS ON THE CONDOMINIUM WERE RATHER CLOUDY.

8. COMMENT: THE SPEECHES AND PRESS CONFERENCE CONTAINED LITTLE THEAT WAS NEW. THE SUBSTANTIVE MATTERS WERE COVERED IN THE COLOMBIA-VENEZUELA DECLARATION (BOGOTA 7162), WHICH CONTAINED NOTE-WORTHY INITIATIVES IN THE ECONOMIC FIELD, AND IN THE LATIN AMERICAN DECLARATION (BOGOTA), WHICH INDICATED A GROWING SPIRIT OF COOPERATION AMONG LATIN AMERICANS TO CONFRONT COMMON PROBLEMS. THE SPEECHES AND PRESS CONFERENCE ADID, HOWEVER, HIGHLIGHT THE FIRM AND APPARENTLY UNYIELDING STAND MADE BY TORRIJOS ON THE CANAL ISSUE AND PRODUCED HIS ALLUSION TO AMDTHER VIETNAM. DURING THE PRESS CONFERENCE PEREZ ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD STAY ON A FEW ADDITIONAL HOURS IN SANTA MARTA SPECIFICALLY TO DISCUSS THE TERRITORIAL WATERS DISPUTE WITH LOPEZ, INDICATING A WILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE THE SEARCH FOR A SOLUTION. THE ANNOUNCEMENT REKINDLED HOPES THAT SOME PROGRESS WOULD BE MADE ON THE MATTER, BUT FOLLOWING THEADDTIIONAL TALKS LOPEZ AND PEREZ SIMPLY ANNOUNCED THAT "UNNECESSARY EXPECTATIONS" SHOULD NOT BE CREATED AND SUGGESTED THAT A SOLUTION WOULD NOT BE FOUND IN THE IMMEDIATE FUTURE. THERRITORIAL WATERS TALKS HAVE DRAGGED ON FOR EIGHT YEARS NOW AND VENEZUELA CLEARLY HAS THE UPPER HAND, GIVING HER NO REASON TO MAKE CONCESSIONS. NO BREAKTHROUGH IS IN SIGHT AND IT APPEARS THAT LOPEZ AND PEREZ ARE MAKING A COMMENDABLE EFFORT TO KEEP EMOTIONS COOLED THROUGH THE PROCESS OF CONTINUING DIALOGUE. VAKY

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